

VETERANS SERVICES DEPARTMENT

I. DEPARTMENT MISSION

Established in 1946, the County Veterans Service Office/Officer (CVSO) provides assistance and advocacy to the men and women who served in the Armed Forces of America, their dependents and survivors, and the general public in obtaining benefits/entitlements from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Defense (DOD), State and local programs for veterans and their families.

MANDATE: The Board of Supervisors has the authority to appoint, prescribe the qualifications, and set the compensation for a CVSO. Staff and facility support for the CVSO is provided under the provisions of sections 970 and 972, Military and Veterans Code (MVC) of California.

GOAL: In addition to the mission statement above, a major component of our department is to provide cost-avoidance to the County Departments of Health Services and Employment and Human Services via VA health care eligibility and Welfare Referral Program respectfully.

II. MAJOR PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

A. SERVICES

Assist veterans and their dependents with access to earned benefits/entitlements by providing the following:

1. Comprehensive benefit counseling, claim preparation, case management and appeal assistance when appropriate.
2. County Welfare Referral (CW-5) Program which assists those clients applying for public assistance (CalWorks, Medi-Cal, Food Stamps and General Assistance – GA) to be referred to our services in the hope of acquiring veteran benefits thereby cost-avoiding public assistance and local county health care cost.
3. Information and referral services and crisis intervention.
4. Assistance with the following primary entitlements:
 - a. Disability Compensation (service-connected)
 - b. Disability Pension (non service-connected)
 - c. Dependency Indemnity Compensation (DIC) for surviving spouse and children
 - d. Death Pension for surviving spouse and children
 - e. VA, CHAMPVA, and TRICARE medical care access
 - f. Education and dependent education

- g. College Tuition Fee Waiver for dependents
- h. Vocational Rehabilitation
- i. Housebound, Aid and Attendance benefits
- j. Clothing and dependent allowances
- k. Special Adaptive Housing and Auto Grants
- l. VA Home Loans and CAL-VET Home Loans
- m. VA Life Insurance
- n. State Veterans Homes – Yountville, Barstow and Chula Vista
- o. Burial benefits
- p. Many other ancillary benefits and programs

B. DEPARTMENT DATA

- 1. Budget (0579) – FTE 7
FY 2002-2003 Gross Expenditures \$610,818
FY 2003-2004 (proposed) Gross Expenditures \$621,054
- 2. Staff Training: The California Association of County Veterans Service Officers, Inc. (CACVSO) sponsors three (3) mandatory professional accreditation training conferences per year. The California Department of Veterans Affairs (CDVA) designates \$2,500 per year from State Subvention allocations to offset the cost of attendance to each participating county. In addition, the Department Head conducts ongoing training for staff, especially professional staff, regarding frequent changes of laws/regulations/policies/procedures of programs at the federal/state/local levels. Each staff member is also encouraged to participate in the county training provided by the County Training Institute. Staff participated in 152 hours of mandatory and county sponsored training this past year.
- 3. Automation: We are approaching the conclusion of our longstanding automation project to link our main office in Martinez and branch office in Richmond.

III. DEPARTMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A. Another year of high volume workload and client assistance has been performed by a dedicated staff of Jill Martinez, Debbie Garcia, DuWayne Smith, Phil Munley, Luinda Dayak, and Rhonda Williams. There was a 4% increase in claims/appeals filed. (See Workload Indicators)
- B. During the past year, hundreds of new client veterans received life preserving VA medical care and monetary benefits the result of our case management assistance. Clients obtained \$5,596,814 in new recurring monetary benefits. (See Workload Indicators)

- C. Under the California College Tuition Fee Waiver Program, our department granted 283 dependents, of service disabled veterans, state-mandated tuition and registration fee waivers at the University of California (UC), California State University (CSU) and Community College campuses throughout California. (See Workload Indicators)
- D. During federal fiscal year 2001, Contra Costa County veterans, their dependents/survivors and other beneficiaries received \$59,388,377 in monetary assistance from compensation, pension readjustment and vocational rehabilitation, insurance and indemnities. Since 1946, our department has been the primary source for the veteran community to access and maintain these annual recurring monetary benefits. In addition, this revenue stimulates the local economy and approximately 16% (\$9,502,140) flows back into the county general fund in the form of tax revenue. This revenue not only covers our entire annual department budget, but it helps fund other vital county departments and programs as well.
- E. Our department welfare referral program resulted in \$943,373 of cost-avoidance savings to the public assistance programs of CalWorks, Medi-Cal and General Assistance. (See Workload Indicators)
- F. The Department Head performed over 200 hours of evening, weekend and holiday department business to include outreach, presentations, seminars and speeches to veteran organizations, civic organizations, general public and the press/media.

IV. DEPARTMENT CHALLENGES

- A. To prepare for budget reductions and reduced services due to federal/state/local deficits and the slowing economy.
- B. The VA claims/appeals “backlog crisis” is continuing to create anxiety and frustration with clients and staff. However, the implementation of a National Task Force findings are making improvements to the VA adjudicative process. The Department Head was a participant in the Task Force.
- C. Unfortunately, the war on terrorism will be with us for the foreseeable future and is having an impact on our veterans such as exasperating combat related conditions such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). And most importantly, this department will be ready to provide services to this new generation of veterans who have defended our freedom and liberty at home and around the world.

V. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

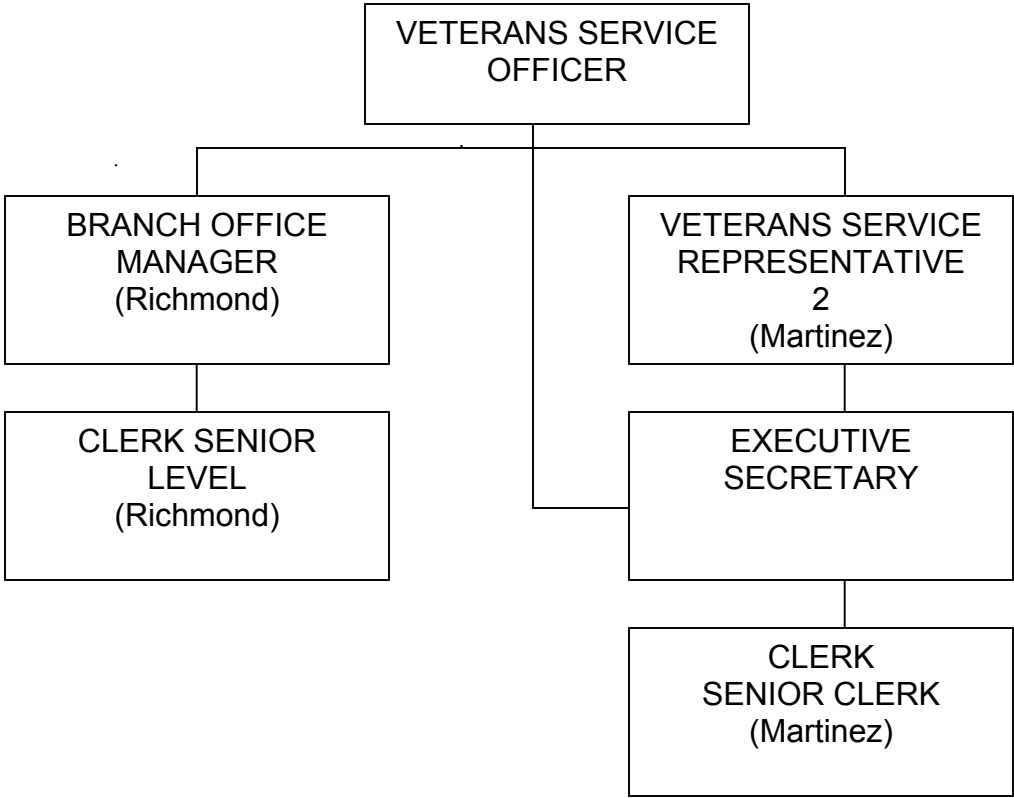
Many tasks that we perform in Veteran Services for the public cannot be benchmarked, measured or quantified. Our work involves sensitive and complex issues that are often very personal in nature such as combat issues. We are fact finders and problem solvers. We deal with all aspects of physical/mental disablement and profound bereavement. Our clients represent all ages, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. Many of our clients are county employees. Some clients are hostile and belligerent. We endeavor to be alert, sensitive and compassionate to the needs and concerns of our clients. The following tasks are examples of items difficult to measure or quantify:

- A. Answering a high volume of client questions during office interviews, phone calls, via correspondence and e-mail
- B. Conduct detailed and probing interviews with clients
- C. Answering questions from federal, state and local agencies
- D. Obtain supporting documentation for claims/appeals to include but not limited to the following:
 - 1. Military separation/discharge documents
 - 2. Military personnel records
 - 3. Death/marriage/divorce/birth documents
 - 4. Physician statements of diagnosis and treatment history
 - 5. Service medical records (SMR's)
 - 6. Private medical records (PMR's)
 - 7. Operation/pathology/autopsy/MRI/radiology reports
 - 8. Hospital discharge summaries
 - 9. Miscellaneous information from National Archives
 - 10. Affidavits in support of claims/appeals
 - 11. Funeral/cemetery bills and paid receipts
 - 12. Medical expenses and income reports
- E. Time to ready/study SMR's, PMR's and other medical reports
- F. Claim/appeal packaging and transmittal
- G. Numerous clerical/reception functions conducted by all staff

WORKLOAD INDICATORS:	<u>2000-2001</u>	<u>2001-2002</u>
Claims/Appeals	1,213	1,262
Office Interviews	3,612	3,663
Field Interviews	140	130
Incoming Telephone Calls	13,139	14,447
Correspondence In	7,891	8,343
Correspondence Out	5,652	5,525
Welfare Referrals	775	678
Welfare Referrals Claims Filed	22	59
College Tuition Fee Wavier Program		
Students Approved:		
UC	87	67
CSU	105	100
CC	107	100
Students Denied	6	16
Total Served	305	283
Savings Realized	\$639,228	\$476,727
<u>Cost Avoidance:</u>	<u>No. Clients/\$</u>	<u>No. Clients/\$</u>
Medi-Cal (includes CalWorks)	180/\$1,001,308	177/\$943,373
General Assistance (GA)	3/\$36,035	0/\$0
<u>New Recurring Payments and Lump Sum</u>	<u>721/\$5,781,022</u>	<u>605/\$5,596,814</u>

VETERANS SERVICES DEPARTMENT

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



Management	5
<u>Non-management</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	7